

wright (M. B.)

A

LECTURE,

DELIVERED

TO THE STUDENTS

OF THE

MEDICAL COLLEGE OF OHIO,

AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION, 1841—2,

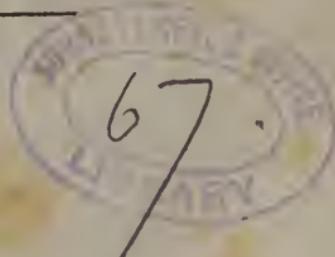
BY M. B. WRIGHT, M. D.,

Professor, &c.

CINCINNATI:

J. & C. H. Brough,

1841.



At a meeting of the Students of the Medical College of Ohio, held in said College, for the purpose of appointing a Committee to request of Professor WRIGHT his Introductory Lecture for publication, Mr. T. RYAN was called to the chair, and D. JUDKINS appointed Secretary.

The object of the meeting having been stated, it was, on motion,

Resolved, That a committee of three be appointed to fulfil the above request. Whereupon, the chair appointed Messrs. LACOCK, COTTLE and BLACK, said Committee.

T. RYAN, *President.*

D. JUDKINS, *Secretary.*

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E.

CINCINNATI, November 26, 1841.

SIR: The Students of the Medical College of Ohio, through us their committee, beg leave to assure you of the high pleasure afforded them by your recent Introductory Address, and very respectfully solicit a copy of the same for publication.

We have the honor to be, Sir, yours, &c.,

S. G. LAYCOCK,
LUCIUS A. COTTLE.
E. D. BLACK,

Committee.

Professor M. B. WRIGHT.

CINCINNATI, December 2, 1841.

GENTLEMEN:—You have my thanks for the manner in which you have noticed my last introductory lecture, and in accordance with your request, it is herewith placed at your disposal.

It has been said, that in this lecture, I have “made an attack upon the clergy.” To so indefinite a charge, it is difficult to reply, and I shall meet it, therefore, with a mere denial. I have embraced this influential class of individuals, in a few remarks, aimed at the *defence* of my profession, and I hope that none of us will shrink from our duty, in protecting it against future violence. If, as a profession, we would be true to the public, we must be true to ourselves. If we have been time-servers, let us be no longer. If we have bent the knee for favor, until we have felt the foot of oppression upon our necks, let us put forth the strength that is within us, and rise from the degradation. If united, confiding, and resolute, we may yet save many valuable citizens from those evil influences, which gather around the sick-bed, under the guise of benevolence.

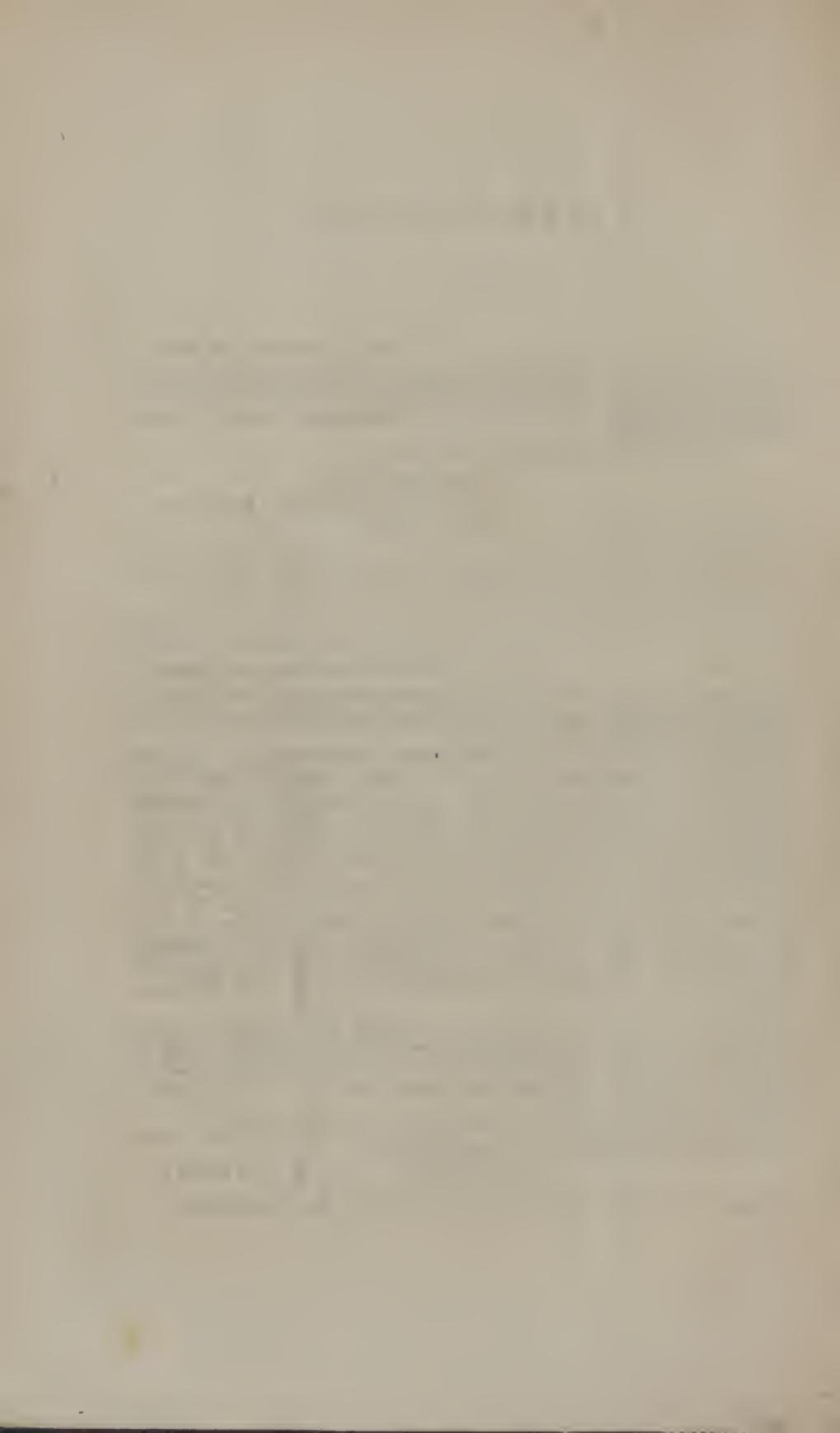
Should other parts of my lecture be deemed objectionable, censure must pass me, to those circumstances by which I was surrounded, and by which I was governed. I hope, however, that like many of our prescriptions, the lecture will prove more useful than agreeable. If so, my object will have been accomplished.

That you, Gentlemen, and those you represent, may enjoy long lives of prosperity and happiness, is the sincere wish of

Your friend,

M. B. WRIGHT.

Messrs. S. G. LAYCOCK, LUCIUS A. COTTLE, E. D. BLACK, Committee.



INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

To present you an elaborate disquisition, upon any one branch of Medical Science, forms no part of my design, upon the present occasion. A brief allusion to a few of the incidents of professional life, will be more in accordance with my own views and feelings. I hope, also, that this plan will meet with your approbation. I may say some things calculated to dishearten the timid and inexperienced; but, they should bear in mind, that every occupation in life, has its perplexities as well as pleasures.— I could not wholly dishearten you if I would, for you are already aware, that to prosecute the study, or to pursue the practice of medicine successfully, requires no ordinary share of courage and determination.— You can claim but few of the enlivening influences which are experienced during an advancement in other pursuits. The apprenticed mechanic is cheerful in his toils, from the facility with which he handles the implements of his trade, and his daily improvement in manufacturing skill.— The young merchant is encouraged with the prospect of becoming, at once, a business man. No sooner does he learn to fold goods, to measure tape, and to collect bills, than he finds himself in possession of a smiling countenance, an oily tongue, and a persuasive language and manner. In a word, he has acquired, with but little trouble, the tact of a salesman.— On the contrary, the student of medicine is compelled to undergo years of probationary labor, before he is justified in testing the amount and value of his knowledge. He, also, makes constant and large expenditures, without one source of professional income, while those engaged in other pursuits, are compensated, more or less, from the commencement to the close of their services.

The accumulation of a surplus capital, the stimulus of most others to enterprise and exertion, does not enter into a physician's expectations.— In this respect, indeed, his situation is peculiar. The bills of the merchant, the mechanic, the lawyer, and even the printer, are all paid before those of the doctor. Upon no just ground, however, can such neglect be advocated; nor would it be practiced, if men did not so soon forget their sick-bed resolutions. That reformation is necessary in this particular, may be urged in the strongest language of interest, if not of feeling. To discriminate accurately, and to prescribe with success, the mind of the physician should be free from all extraneous anxiety. Above all, the hand of poverty should not rest heavily upon him. He who enters the chamber of his patient with the constable at his heels, and applies with calmness and accuracy the remedy to the disease, must possess more indifference than belongs to common mortals.

But let us examine this subject a little further. How widely, and how strangely different are the demands upon physicians, from those upon most other men. The very acts which would meet with strong condemnation in the former, would be excused or unheeded in the latter. Notice the ragged boy as he walks the streets of the city—listen to his plaintive tale—hear him ask for a little tea or sugar for a sick parent;—but pass not on, until you have heard, and your heart has felt, the hasty response, “where is your money?” Does the bereaved mother, decrepid under the weight of years, solicit materials for the shroud of a dead daughter, she is arrested by the enquiry, “Old woman, where is your money?”

Would the physician treat thus the objects of charity? Or dare he if he would? No. Though suffering himself from want, he is always expected to give. Neither the season nor the hour, prevents him from going forth to the relief of suffering humanity. There are none, however situated, who do not claim a share in his sympathies. Constantly is he administering to some poor wretch, with whom many in community would not permit their dogs to associate. The physician bestows, gratuitously, what, if counted in the purse, would make him rich. Is it not then, the grossest injustice, to have withheld from him, his legal, equitable demands, by those who are abundantly able to pay?

You will not find any class of individuals more anxious to be free from debt, than Physicians. How far they succeed in their wishes, is no business of mine; but, it is useless to deny the fact, that they are not, generally, the most acceptable debtors. If it be true, that they are slow in the payment of their debts, it is doubtless attributable to causes not wholly within their own control. There are but few medical men who have inherited wealth, and when those who have not been so fortunate, are denied compensation for their services, how can they be punctual in the liquidation of demands against them?

It would seem to be a very general belief, that Physicians accumulate easily and rapidly, this world's goods, or that they can live upon their good deeds. This belief, however, is not the offspring of sober reflection, and if not banished by intelligent minds, it needs not the eye of prophecy to foresee the result. Unless there should be a mutual recompense, as well as reliance, between the Physician and a large portion of his patrons, his freedom of thought and action will be curtailed, and ultimately, he will sink down into the most humble of dependants.

I have not the time, nor is the present the most proper occasion, to bring before you this subject in all its details. But, if you will trouble yourselves to reflect upon the condition of many of those within the circle of your own acquaintance, you will become satisfied, that some efforts are necessary, to save the profession from future ruin.

Call at the office of one, and instead of having his mind engaged upon his several cases of disease, and the effect of his remedies, you will find him calculating chances with a view to profit,—mapping paper cities, and drawing upon his imagination for their commercial and manufacturing advantages. When next you see him, he will boast to you of the money which he has made, by means of what, in old-fashioned times, was denounced as gambling, but which the improvements of the present age sanction, under the more modest term, speculation! Another has turned politician. His books have been exchanged for political papers. He forgets the definition of terms which enlighten the reason, to learn those best calculated to excite party passions. He becomes vociferous in the bar-room, and at all assemblages of the people for political purposes, he is a conspicuous actor. And, finally, you may trace him to the door of political patronage, whither he has gone to demand his reward for *disinterested* services.

Among the causes by which men are induced thus to abandon their profession, none is more conspicuous than the want of means by which to live. We certainly should not ascribe it to any unwillingness to engage in laborious efforts. If so, sad indeed would be the disappointment.—Take as an example, the mere office seeker. He is constantly busy—busy in making professions, and busy in convincing the people that he is as great a man as he fancies himself to be. If he is successful in obtaining office, he cannot keep it, unless he is faithful in the discharge of its duties, or without bestowing upon his party constant electioneering services. If

he fails to secure an appointment, he never ceases to express his grief and indignation, and redoubles his energies in behalfs of those more competent to appreciate his merits.

It is worthy of remark, however, that a vast deal of the pecuniary distress of Physicians, is owing to a want of common business knowledge among themselves. At the commencement of practice, a large majority are not prepared by experience, for a systematic keeping and collecting of accounts, and from their reluctance to engage in such matters subsequently, they fail to secure a proper remuneration for their services.—Every Physician should feel as easy in the presentation of his bills, as he is conscious of having conferred adequate benefits; and, yet, there is no duty engaged in with more reluctance. Why this is so, need not be fully explained, but in view of the fact, that early habits influence subsequent actions, we might venture to suggest, that the education of young men for the practice of medicine, should undergo a radical change. The Physician should require the student under his charge, not only to read books and to compound medicine, but also, to devote a portion of his time to financial concerns. Such a regulation could not be otherwise than mutually beneficial. The student would acquire a species of knowledge greatly necessary in all the operations of practical life. The Physician would be enabled to devote more time to study—to investigate more closely his cases, and to enjoy more invigorating repose. And I sincerely hope, that this subject may be presented to the profession properly and forcibly, and that it will be, not only seriously considered, but reduced to practice.

There are a few mere money-makers of the profession, who are of no value except to themselves—who contribute nothing to the common stock of professional knowledge, and when they depart from a limited routine of practice, it is to gratify the blind prejudices and morbid appetites of others. They indulge in no elevated desires—the kindlier sympathies of man they know nothing of, and the extent of their duties is estimated by anticipated profit. My language, therefore, is not intended to be in fellowship with their sentiments. I desire, by what has been already said, to advocate the cause of the large majority, who, if paid every farthing of their just demands, would not be compensated for the time expended—for the toil and depressing anxiety to which they are constantly subjected.

In examining the nature, and in estimating the extent of a physician's services, it should be recollect that he is not allowed to select his patients, as is the merchant his customers. All classes of persons, whether poor or rich, humble or exalted, have equal demands upon his knowledge and skill. For this there are several reasons, one of which may be mentioned. In our country, it is not easy to say, upon whom our services will be most beneficially bestowed. Every man may look forward to the post of confidence and distinction, and who can tell, whether in rendering service to those filling high stations, or to the occupant of the secluded cabin, he is accomplishing the most extended and the most enduring good? To settle this question more to the satisfaction of our own minds, let us examine it for one moment.

When the late President of the United States was known to be ill, every eye was turned towards the Capitol. One day we were elated with the prospect of his recovery—the next brought us the melancholy intelligence that his toil-worn system was yielding to the power of disease. When it was announced that HARRISON was numbered with the dead, a whole nation mourned his departure; and when the oft-repeated question came to our ears, did his Physicians discharge their duty? it had reference to the elevated character of their patient. But, were their obligations in this instance, peculiar in their nature? Strong, indeed, were the claims of the venerated HARRISON upon the affections and confidence of the people,

—responsible was his station, and great was the shock which his country sustained, when his soul took its flight from mortality. But his place, as the head of a great nation, could not go long unsupplied. The spirit of our constitution, and a common interest, forbid it. Every where, over this broad land, are men whose minds are sound—whose views are elevated—and whose intentions are patriotic; and although possessing their own peculiar traits of character, are fully able to render immense service, and ever willing to devote their best energies to their country.

On the other hand, when the head of a family dies, there are none who are willing to replace his care and protection. Time alone lessens the bereavement, and accustoms the heart to its desolation. And, with this parent's guardianship, the young, but sturdy and energetic boy, might one day reach the highest point of man's ambition. He, too, might lead armies to victory, and become the head of a great nation. We are bound then, *always*, to do our duty.

Among the many impediments to a rapid and successful advancement in medical studies, may be mentioned,

1st, Intellectual disqualification.

2d, Early discouragements.

3d, A thoughtless neglect of professional obligations—upon each of which, I have a few words to advance, in the order in which they are presented.

Fondness of offspring, is an inherent principle in man's nature, and his anxiety for their success in life, increases with their advancement to manhood. Nor does this anxiety subside, even after they have been left to buffet the world single-handed. Many there are, who, in their reflections upon the future, have imagined, that if they should ever be blessed with a son, he would be a prodigy in intellect—very much like the father—and the sphere which he is to occupy in life, is settled in advance. Or if the boys have become already somewhat numerous, that profession is selected for them, to which their individual capacities are supposed to be best adapted. It has been said, that in making this choice, the one possessing the most amiability of character, is assigned for the ministry. Another manifesting a high order of intellect, combined with much cunning, is put to the study of the law. Then, there is a third—what is to be done with him? Why, he is a dull thinker, a clownish fellow, of not much credit to the family, and of him is made a doctor! Such, I observe, is a part of the sayings with which we are occasionally presented. Upon them, however, I am not disposed to make any comments of censure, for they emanate from those who are as devoid of wit, as they are incapable of correct observation. Our profession need not yield to any other, in a deep, heart-felt solicitude for the happiness of man, nor in reference to the intellect necessary to secure that happiness. With respect to the cunning, I need only say, that I shall not attempt to sever its connection, although it seems rather ungenerous, that we should be denied all participation in a faculty esteemed so useful.

It is a fact, however, that many young men are disqualified for medical distinction, by a dislike of the details embraced in medical studies. And if any of you are engaged in these studies, to gratify the wishes of a fond parent, against your own positive inclination, you had better stop where you are. Under such a state of things, you have a doubtful reputation before you, and many valuable lives may be put to hazard. If you are engaged in acquiring a knowledge of medicine, with no other object than to render your position in society respectable, it is my duty to declare that you are blinded to your destiny. Reputation as a man, will depend upon your intelligence and moral bearing;—reputation as a physician, upon *medical knowledge* and success in practice. To be a doctor in name, is

no great honor—to be one in fact, is to be as high as your ambition need ever desire.

We have already hinted, and now assert, that the members of the medical profession possess as much strength and activity of mind, and enjoy as wide a range of intellectual culture, as can be found in any other profession; yet, there are some who pass a miserable, unprofitable existence, for want of that most useful of all endowments—common sense. By this we mean as understood in every-day language, an ability to apply knowledge successfully to practice. To a physician, this is as necessary as knowledge itself. Without it, however learned he may be, he can never reap the advantages of a successful practice.

Professional discouragements arise from various causes. A restless ambition is adverse to correct scientific attainments, and success in practice. Although, I firmly believe, that students think too little, and act too seldom, yet, if they aim at a display of skill in advance of knowledge, they will reap, as their reward, the saddest disappointment. The surest, and consequently, the best way to attain success, is to enter the path of study at its beginning, and to travel in it steadily and undeviatingly to the end. The limited knowledge which we now have, is to us far more valuable than the immense mass of facts which we have not; for, without the one, the other could neither be acquired nor understood. The information which we have gained to-day, should satisfy us of what we can learn by the efforts of to-morrow.

Again, young men falter in their scientific pursuits, in consequence of the extra exertion which they find it necessary to make, to keep pace in knowledge with their associates. If such is the relative situation of any one present, permit me to say, that it is well for you. You will be the more willing to call industry to your aid, without which, there is but little that you can accomplish. It is well, that you do not rely with over confidence upon your own natural abilities, independent of exertion. Self-conceit is the rock upon which the adventurous barks of too many young men are apt to split.

A neglect of professional obligations, arises not so much from a dislike to their performance, as to an habitual indulgence in other associations. We have all experienced the overwhelming influence of appetites artificially created. We have witnessed the blighting effects of some, upon the dearest interests of our dearest friends. And, as we often quote cases to illustrate our views, allow me to introduce one closely connected with our present subject.

This is a dreary night, said I to a friend, as we were about retiring to bed. It is just such an one as country physicians have cause to dread; for, if twenty sunny days have passed over their heads without a patient, a summons and a storm are sure to come together. At this moment, a heavy knock was heard at the door, and in another, an individual entered and seated himself by the half-smouldered fire, as unceremoniously as if he had been the equitable claimant of the premises.—The rain from his tattered garments trickled upon the floor, and he shook as if in a fit of the ague. After several ineffectual efforts to compose his limbs, he pulled from under his loose wrapper a brown jug, which he raised to his mouth, and of whose contents he partook freely. He drank the second and the third time, before he became sufficiently composed to express his wishes. At length, said he, "This is a dreadful night to ride, but a far more dreadful one to be sick in a leaky cabin!" You seem lost, bewildered, said I. "Aye," said he, "lost to happiness; bewildered like the man who beholds not his sins until the wrath of God is upon him!" These remarks had scarcely been uttered, when a vivid flash of lightning darted across the room, as if in token of vengeance.

upon some one present,—the thunder rolled through the heavens, and large drops of rain were driven forcibly against the window.—The outer elements, in a word, were all in fearful commotion; but, seemingly, it was nothing compared with the agitation of that man's soul! Finally, he threw a wild glance upon me, and, as if pricked by some inward emotion, expressed, in distinct language, the wish, that I would accompany him to see his sick wife. Assent was given, and after a dark and gloomy ride of several miles, I was conducted into a rude, half-finished place of abode; and at this distant day, when I ask myself, what did I there behold? pain seizes the very inmost of my feelings! Poverty never claimed a more hungry, miserable, cadaverous looking family of beings. Disease never preyed upon a more attenuated frame—upon a more heart-broken female, than she who occupied the only article to be seen in the shape of a bed.

Exposure to the storm—the lashings of a guilty conscience—the dread of a deserved doom—had prevented the spirituous potations from exerting their usually exhilarating influence upon the degraded husband. Delirium Tremens came soon upon him as a consequence; and never did a mind suffer severer torments. He endeavored to hide himself from his thousand imaginary pursuers, but he could not—flee from them he could not—conquer them he could not. His was, in truth, a laughter-creating, yet melancholy madness.

Time and medicine restored him to reason—to a full perception of his fallen condition, and to the wants of those who had called upon him in vain for protection and support. Still, he looked around for his old companion in folly and sin, and as he could not fix his eyes upon it, he enquired, "Where is the brown jug?" His feeble wife replied with that peculiar mildness which characterized all her actions, "It is broken.—When you were very wild and violent, you supposed it to be an enemy come to destroy you—you gave it a heavy blow, and it is broken." After gazing upon the neglected one a few moments, with a stillness that might have been mistaken for the sleep of the grave, he embraced her fervently, and exclaimed, "Wife! we are yet saved! the spell is gone, and I shall return to sober and industrious life!" From that hour, happiness and prosperity smiled upon a family, that had known for years nothing but wretchedness.

If you would pursue your profession honorably and successfully, guard closely against the formation of injurious habits. *Break that brown jug, or you are gone!*

There is nothing in regard to which so much wisdom is assumed, as upon the practice of medicine. Individuals, however ignorant upon general subjects, do not hesitate to advance opinions respecting any medical topic that may be presented. By a wink of the eye they can understand a disease, which the most experienced physician may not have been able, fully, to comprehend. And there would be no great harm in permitting such persons to enjoy a good opinion of themselves, were it not for their impertinent interference in the directions of enlightened practitioners, and especially in cases where life might be endangered by the slightest departure from correct treatment. In fact, it is in the latter cases that they are most disposed to act, and seem to think their services more especially demanded. But, the time has come, when such presumption should receive its just rebuke. It is the means of destroying many, very many, valuable lives. When the prescriptions of the physician are changed, either by adding to, or subtracting from their amount,—or when the proper time for their administration is disregarded, he cannot be expected to administer with success, or even with safety. It would be far more advantageous to the patient, to rely solely upon the efforts of nature, than upon medicine so varied in dose, or so compounded as to

render its action uncertain. But, how are we to check such officiousness on the part of pretended or misguided friends? By argument? No.— You will be defeated by this; for they will tell you what you cannot gainsay—that they prescribe after the manner of their aunt or grandmother, who never lost a patient! Will you attack them by harsh epithets? If you do, their course will be still more determined, and more to to the injury of your patient. What then is to be done? I do not know of any effectual remedy, but to bring upon the offenders the strong arm of the law. It is the only way to arouse their sensibilities, and to incite them to proper reflection. If they cannot be reached by any penal statutes now in existence, severer enactments should be demanded. Laws are as necessary for the protection of life, in these cases, as when you have reason to fear the knife of the assassin. At all events, such aggressors should be visited by no less punishment, than is, at times, inflicted upon the practitioner. He is made to suffer for mal-practice, and if life or limb is endangered by the wilful neglect or interference of others, why should they not be held accountable also? Is a fatal indulgence in self-will to be excused, when ignorance is no shield against penalty?

You are all aware, that opposition is encountered by every man in his progress through life. But, occasionally, you will receive it from a quarter, which your present knowledge of men and things does not lead you to expect. This opposition has been borne by physicians, not only with characteristic meekness, but with very long silence. And although I have no hope that any thing I may say, will change the views or practice of a single individual, I am not willing that the present occasion shall pass by, without alluding briefly to the subject, that you, too, may be prepared to meet it in a becoming spirit.

After having attended the family of an individual for months and years, with an assiduity and success, well calculated to establish confidence in your integrity and skill, you will find him to have become, suddenly, the advocate of some falacious doctrine, or some bold impostor. This charge I do not intend to make against laymen, but against a portion of those who exercise an unbounded influence over them—the clergy. I say a portion of the clergy, and I am happy that I am thus limited in the objects of my remarks. To the opposition, then, which we receive from these individuals, we object for several reasons, although we shall allude to but one or two. We object to it, in the first place, because it authorises against them the accusation of inconsiderate or wilful ingratitude. They are not charged for professional services, notwithstanding they may be, and, in most instances, are, as able to pay, as physicians are to give. But it is natural, that we should look for something more than a heedless and determined hostility. We are thankful for the prayers of their tongues, and these might satisfy us, did we not know that they are counterbalanced by frequent denunciations of the heart. Return evil for good, is language which they, of all other men, should not engrave upon their code of morals. We can excuse individual preferences, as belonging to every generous impulse of the human heart; but all our feelings revolt at the interposition of ministerial influence to propagate medical error, or to defeat professional success. True, the individuals before us, return, professedly, to the right faith when life is in peril, and, as every prodigal should do, acknowledge their waywardness; but their minds once in pursuit of vagaries, will not submit long to sober reason, and no sooner is health restored, than they start in eager pursuit of some other dangerous delusion.

And again, in what other light can you view ministerial encroachments upon professional rights, than as downright presumption? Can it be possible, that these men are more competent to judge of the action and value

of remedies, than those engaged in their daily investigation? They may have been called to the ministry, but I deny that God ever intended them to be the special objects of His favor, or that He has bestowed upon them an intuitive perception of the laws of nature; and in the absence of such special endowment, what right have they to dictate to us, or to the people, the system of practice we or they shall adopt or sanction?

In assuming such immense superiority, these kind guardians accuse us of culpable ignorance. But how stand the facts? Every thing dignified with the title of a new system of practice----every thing claimed to be valuable as a remedy in any particular disease, is subjected to the test of experiment by those competent to judge correctly, and under circumstances admitting of no mistake or deception, and the results are communicated to the profession throughout the world. Whatever contains promise of good is retained, while the opposite is as properly rejected. Such is the quiet, but sure and continued manner of acquiring a knowledge of every thing appertaining to the science of medicine. Professional investigations not being published in the every-day journals of our country, nor proclaimed from the corners of the highways, it is not generally known that they have been instituted, and very often a remedy is announced as new, which had been in general use long before, as had been as long abandoned.

It would seem, also, that there is no hesitation in charging us with a want of integrity—with an unwillingness to employ any remedy suggested by those out of regular practice, notwithstanding its high claims may have been fully sustained. This accusation is as unjust as the former. What is the grand aim of Physicians amidst their exertions, their privations, and their deep-felt solicitude? The cure of their patients. And what care they, whence may come the medicine, or may be its character; provided it can accomplish their object? Nothing.

I am aware that many of the individuals who have been arraigned before you, require our pity, as much as they deserve our censure. Their minds are so perverted, that they esteem nothing as valuable which has tangibility. To be deserving of consideration, it must act upon their understandings through the eye of faith. Write them a prescription, plain and simple to common minds, and they reject it as useless. Throw over it the veil of secrecy, and its charm becomes irresistible. The lightning as it darts athwart the heavens, and the thunder which succeeds the flash, produce no emotions in them, when considered philosophically, but when associated with some vague notions of divinity, they stand amazed, and in awe. If CHRIST were to revisit this earth, and stand before them, face to face—if they were to behold Him, nailed to the cross, writhing in agony, and were to hear him exclaim, in his own pathetic language, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" they would not believe in his holiness, until after he had ascended beyond the bounds of human vision!

If I know myself, I would not utter one sentence, which might be construed into a derision of the ministerial character. I would cheerfully perform any service, which might secure it against contamination. I would not address the reflecting portion of the ministry, in any other than in the language of sober and deliberate caution. I would ask them to cast their eyes over the columns of any of the newspapers of our country, and to read the thousands of certificates in favor of quack nostrums, and the names of those appended to them, and then I would ask, whose language is most extravagant, and whose names are most conspicuous? And if, after an unprejudiced examination upon these points, an answer should be returned, I am satisfied it will be in condemnation of their own brethren.

I am ready to admit, that a large portion of those certificates originate in the brains, and flow from the pens, of patentees and vendors.

But their very forgery proves one of two things—either that the clergy, upon these subjects, are credulous to a fault, or that they are generally believed to be so. For some years, my enquiries and observations have been directed to the causes of nostrum seeking, and I am well convinced that, in our day, no species of quackery would have ripened into popularity, if unaided by the nurturing care of too many of these individuals. And if there are any still resolved to abandon that holy ground upon which they should stand, to become the leaders of a dangerous combination, and are ultimately found to be socially and religiously dead, they will become as fit subjects for the knife of the moral dissector, as any other men.

Against a general support of quackery, I have not one word to utter. I have always believed, and still believe, that efforts of this nature, or those of a more formidable character, are decidedly injurious to the cause of truth. Opposition begets curiosity, and curiosity will be gratified, regardless of consequences. And, moreover, I am not certain that the use of secret remedies, is not intended by nature for special purposes. The violent may be designed to rid us of knaves, and the mild to answer for the gratification of the feeble minded.

There is another subject, of some delicacy, to which I cannot fail to give a passing notice. A young man about to leave his home and his friends, in search of a situation favorable for practice, is often supplied with more gratuitous advice than he can turn to good account;—and much of this is given by those, whose judgments are too often controlled, by the honest, but mistaken zeal of their hearts. “When you have selected your location, join our church, and secure its patronage,” is the subject of every-day council; and it is not often passed by unheeded, as many act upon the principle, that professions of goodness, supply defects of knowledge. But, gentlemen, a declaration of wisdom upon important subjects of which you are ignorant, is one sin; hypocrisy in religion, another; and when combined in the same individual, unspeakably detestable is his character.

Do not misinterpret my meaning,—do not understand me as objecting to church-membership, or to your becoming exemplary christians. Would to God that every one of us were true disciples of that best of all Physicians!—that when we had failed to impart healthful action to the mortal body, we might aid the spirit in its joyful flight to eternity!

Happy is the man who can discern the beauties of pure religion—who feels in his heart its persuasive, soothing influence, and who reposes in safety upon its promises and hopes. There is nothing which more effectually controls the impetuous nature of man—nothing better calculated to develope and strengthen his affections—nothing, in a word, more efficient in making him what he should be. The immortal spirit, like Noah’s dove, flies every where, without being able to find one spot upon which to rest its weary wing, until it returns to the place whence it issued.

Great, I say, is the happiness of the true christian—but, doubly cursed will he be, who aims to counterfeit the very essence of his Maker, for the sake of traffic. And I would say to those who encourage such conduct, look well to your responsibilities. While you are offering inducements to the physician, to become at heart and in practice a hypocrite, you are plunging your javelin deeper and deeper into the vitals of undefiled religion. Every day’s observation establishes the fact, that empty professors have filled more hearts with skepticism, than the most hardened villains that ever cursed God and died! Would any man dare, whilst administering the holy sacrament, to say, in words “Eat this, for it is emblematical of the broken body of your Saviour—drink this, for it is his blood—eat and drink, that you may the more effectually impose upon your fellow men?” No, he dare not. His tongue would become paralyzed, and withered in the effort; and yet, it is to be feared, he says this too often in effect,

The time allotted by himself for the delivery of this lecture, has nearly expired, and I shall conclude by inviting your attention to but one or two additional points. To avoid disappointment, and all its unpleasant consequences, we should be cautious, as well at the commencement of our professional career, as at a more subsequent period, how high we permit our expectations to soar. Many look forward, very anxiously, for the time, when every breeze will bring to them the loudest notes of popular applause. To win it, however, is no easy task, even if it were worth the seeking; for, in a great degree, it is the result of accident, rather than of the regular business operations of life. It will depend more upon the flash and noise which accompany our actions, than upon the amount of good we may accomplish. For example, the poet has asked, "Who are the brave?" and the reply has been given, he who moves firmly in face of the foe—he who quails not with the slaughtered around him—he who comes forth from the sanguinary conflict, feeling not his own wounds, but with an eye still fixed upon the honor and glory of his country. Even time does not dim the lustre of his achievements, whilst the Physician, who, undismayed, battles with the pestilence,—who trembles not at his grim and threatening visage—whose soothing voice is heard in the house of desolation—who opens the jaws of the monster, and restores to the child a parent, and to the parent a child, is forgotten with the excitement of the moment.

It will be far more profitable, then, so to shape our course, as to **MERIT** public approbation, if we do not receive it, and to secure the silent acquiescence of our own judgments, with the acquittal of our own consciences. Occasions demanding self-examination, will be presented to us frequently.

When the father has become prostrate, and emaciated by disease—when the world and all its delusive prospects are receding from his vision;

"When with a faltering hand he waves adieu,
To those who love so well, and weep so true;"

when the curtain is being unrolled, and is falling rapidly between him in time and in eternity, then the question will come home upon us, have we knowingly and faithfully performed our important trust?

When we look upon the stiff and inanimate body, and reflect that the eye will beam no more with intelligence; that the lips are sealed against the expression of useful advice; that the heart beats not with its wonted kindness and love; that the hand has ceased its ministrations of benevolence.---When, too, we behold the sobbing mourner approach the coffin, and bend over it to warm the cold cheek with the last kiss of affection; and when we hear, from the fulness of the heart, the exclamation, "My mother! oh, my mother! and are we bereft of thee?" our souls will sink back upon themselves, and we will be forced to enquire, what agency have we had in these things?

When we go to the place of graves—the home of the dead—and read the inscription on the tombstone of one who was our patient—who was a child in whom centered all parental hopes, and around whom entwined the greenest tendrils of parental affection—the deeply-buried will come up before us, a frightful spectacle of an insatiate grave, and demand a retrospect of our skill and fidelity.

And, in conclusion, let me say to you, that, if upon these points you find your sensibilities too painfully acute, bring them under proper control, but do not destroy them. To perform our part aright, we should exercise feeling as well as judgment. He who is devoid of sympathy, cannot appreciate, with sufficient dread, the ravages of death—he does not calculate the full value of those fire-side, home endearments, without which, the journey of life would be pursued with a dull and sorrowful spirit.